

Date of Hearing: July 8, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON RULES

Ken Cooley, Chair

SCR 47 (Hertzberg) – As Introduced May 12, 2021

SENATE VOTE: 38-0

SUBJECT: Sugihara Visas Day.

SUMMARY: Designates July 29, 2021, as Sugihara Visas Day to memorialize the great achievements of Sugihara Chiune in saving thousands of Jewish lives during World War II. Specifically, **this resolution** makes the following legislative findings:

- 1) During World War II, the heroic efforts of a Japanese diplomat named Sugihara Chiune enabled thousands of displaced Jews to escape persecution.
- 2) In 1939, Sugihara became a vice consul of the newly opened Japanese consulate in Kaunas, Lithuania. Soon after Sugihara's posting at the Kaunas consulate, World War II erupted, and a large number of Jewish refugees from Poland had gathered at the Japanese Consulate in Kaunas seeking transit visas that would allow them to pass through Japan and to take refuge in other countries.
- 3) On July 29, 1940, Sugihara began issuing the transit visas, which have become known as “visas for life”. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan had instructed Sugihara to issue transit visas to applicants who had completed immigration procedures to their final destinations and possessed sufficient funds to pay for their travel and stay in Japan, but Sugihara, acting as a humanitarian, also issued transit visas to those who did not meet these requirements.
- 4) The visa list from the Kaunas consulate that exists today contains nearly 2,140 names, but because family members were also allowed entry with a single visa granted to the head of a household, and because some visas were issued without being noted on the list, the number of lives saved is thought to be much higher.
- 5) In 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan established a commemorative plaque in honor of Sugihara's humanitarian acts, which is on display at the Ministry's Diplomatic Archives along with other documents related to the “visas for life”.
- 6) In the Little Tokyo district of Los Angeles, the historic heart of the region's Japanese American community, a bronze statue of Sugihara was installed in 2002, bringing greater awareness to Sugihara's story.
- 7) California has the largest number of residents of Japanese heritage of all states in the United States. The legacy of Sugihara Chiune has helped to foster friendship between Japan and the Jewish American and Japanese American communities.

FISCAL EFFECT: None

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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